



The Photographic Truth



History of Information 103
Geoff Nunberg

March 16, 2017

Study guide tips

Section A: Identify and explain the *relevance to the history of information* of the following.

Socrates:

5th c. BC Greek philosopher who invented the Socratic method and laid the groundwork for Western philosophy and logic...

Study guide tips

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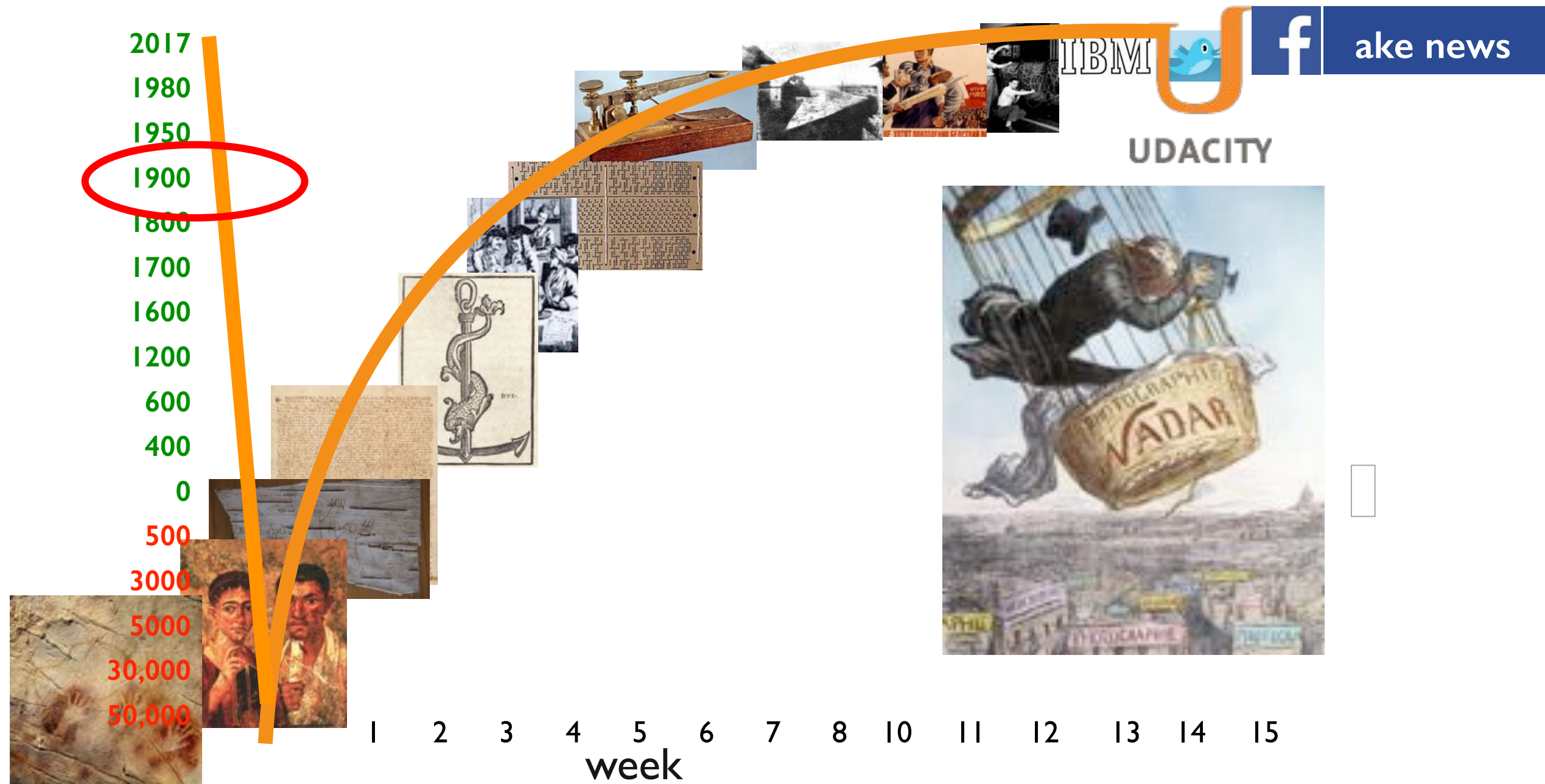
Socrates:

~~5th c. BC Greek philosopher who invented the Socratic method and laid the groundwork for Western philosophy and logic...~~

Greek philosopher. In the Phaedrus he set out several arguments against writing: one cannot enter into a dialectic with the written word; writing degrades memory and gives people a superficial acquaintance with a subject.... etc. (But he owned a lot of books.) (42 wds)



The Impact of Photography



Agenda, 3/16

Why photography?

- Photography as a technology
- photography and information

“Inventing” photography

The photographic "truth"

- Documenting war

- Manipulating the photographic truth

Photography as documentation

- Fixing identities

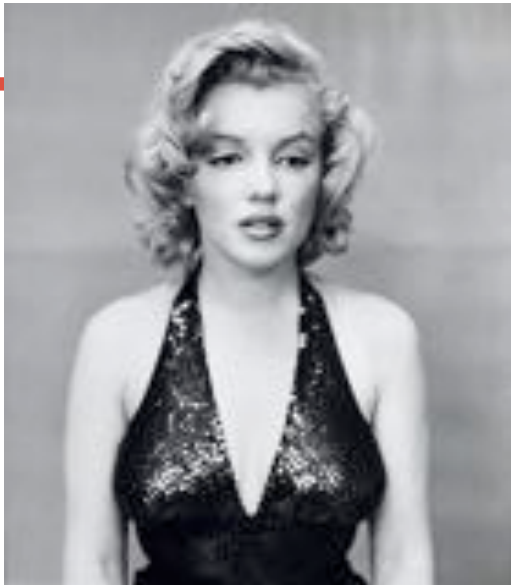
- Documenting the deviant

- Representing the forgotten

(What's left out: photography as art, popular form, scientific tool, etc.)

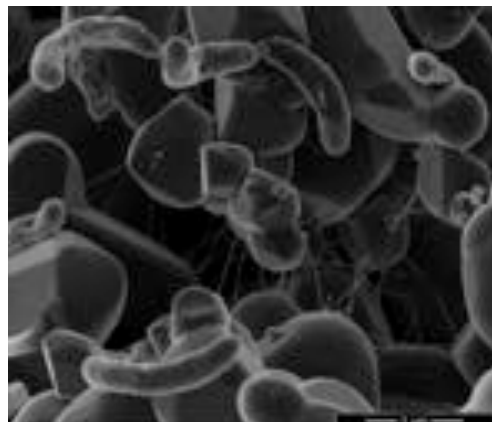
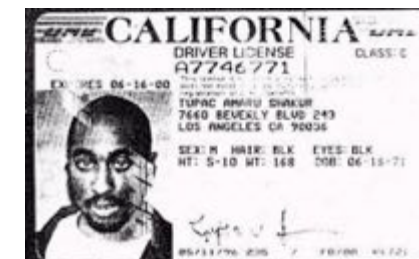


The Range of "Photography"



Things we count as “photography”....

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The Range of “Photography”

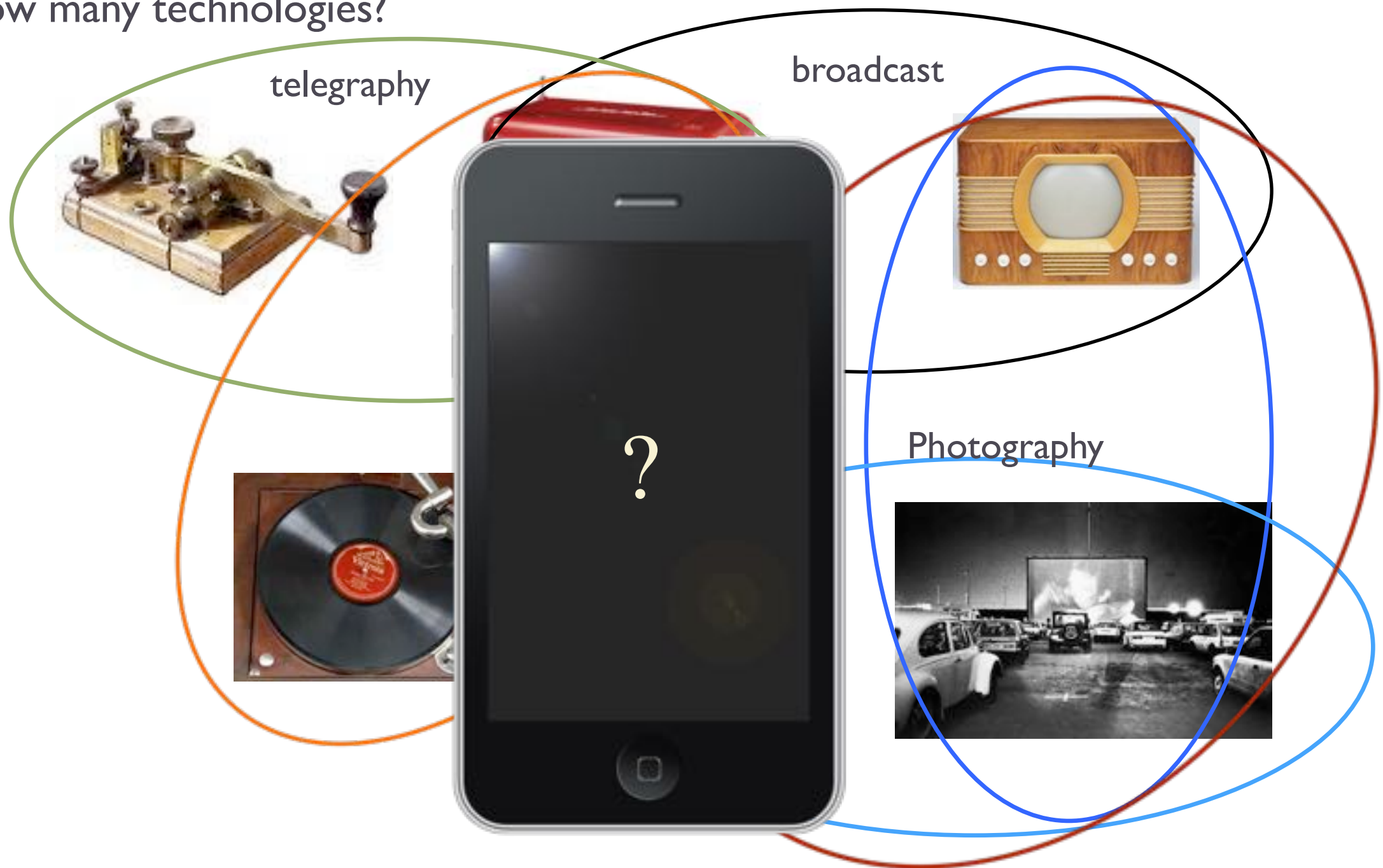


Things we don't (usually) count as photography
What defines a "technology"? Features of use,
distribution, markets etc.

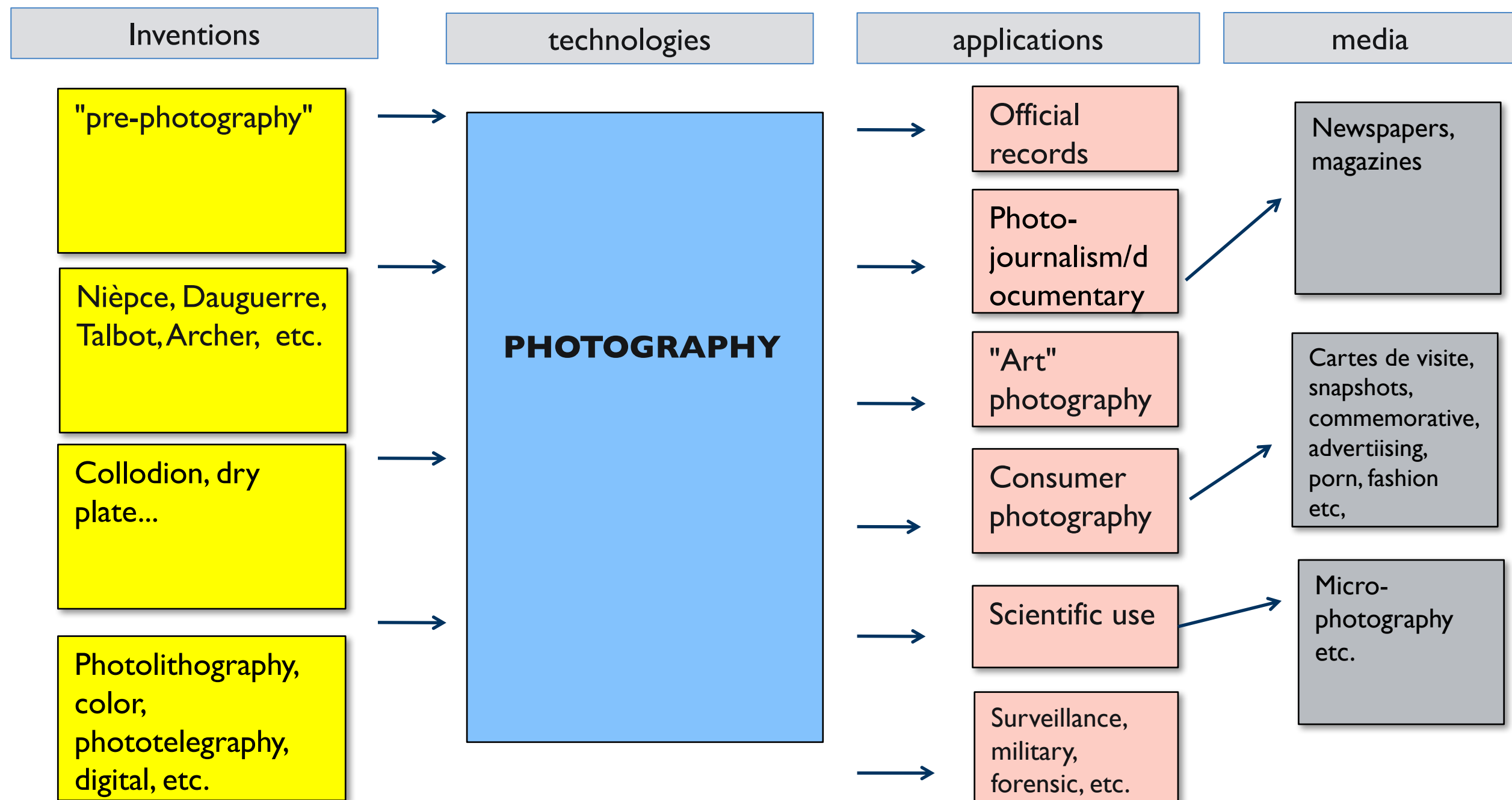


What makes a "technology"?

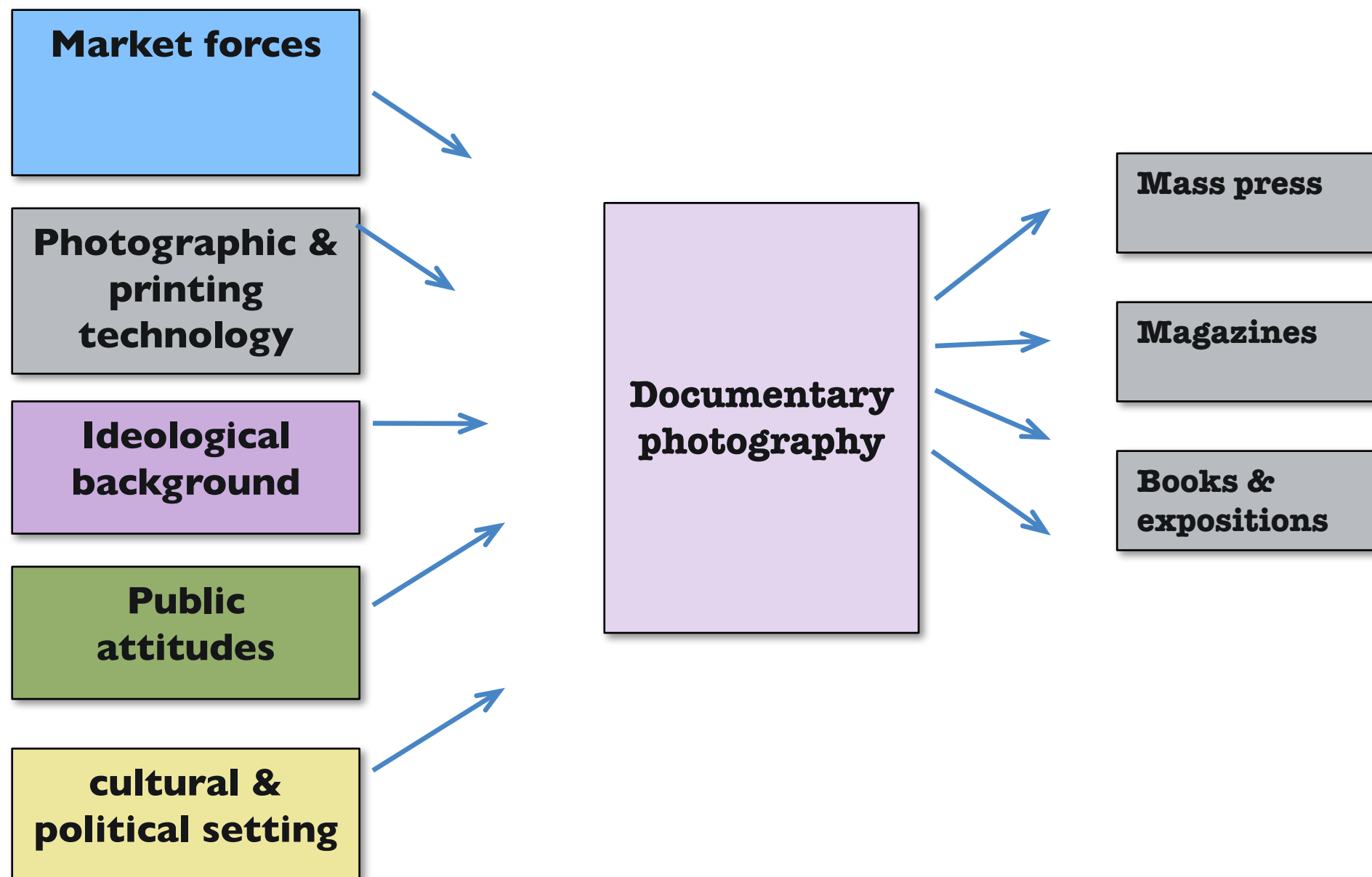
How many technologies?



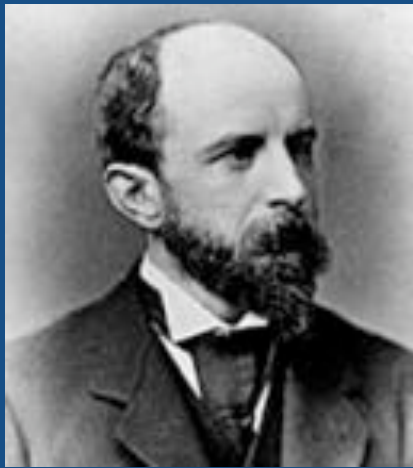
Inventions, Technologies, Applications, Media



Multiple Influences



Modern Marvels



Henry Adams
1838-1928

"Only on looking back, fifty years later, at his own figure in 1854, and pondering on the needs of the twentieth century, he wondered whether, on the whole, the boy of 1854 stood nearer to the thought of 1904, or to that of the year 1 ... Before the boy was six years old [i.e., 1844] he had seen four impossibilities made actual—the ocean-steamer, the railway, the electric telegraph, and **the Daguerreotype.**"

--Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* [1905]

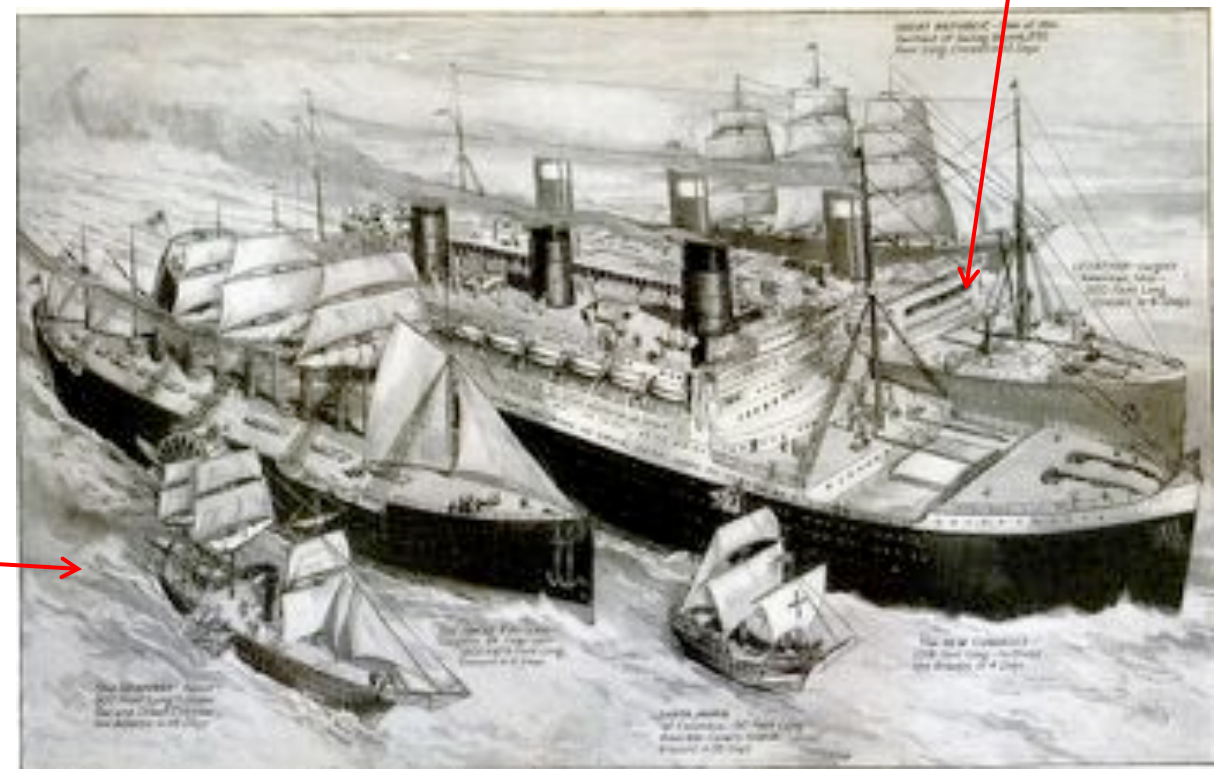


Modern Marvels

“... the ocean-steamer, the railway, the electric telegraph, and the **Daguerreotype**.”



Leviathan 1914
5 days



Savannah 1818
26 days



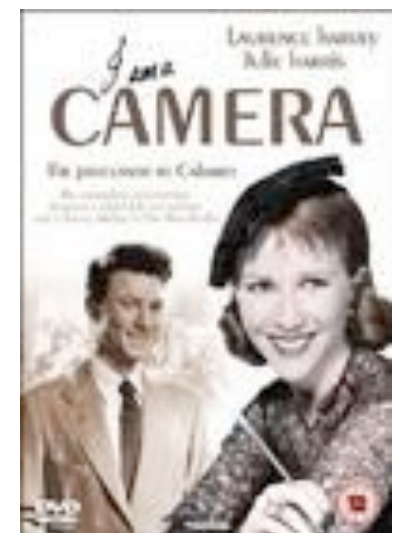
Photography and Information



Photography influences the conception of information:

Directly: Seems to present the world "as it is," independent of human interpretation or intervention.

Indirectly: Provides a model or metaphor for "objective" representation of all sorts.





John

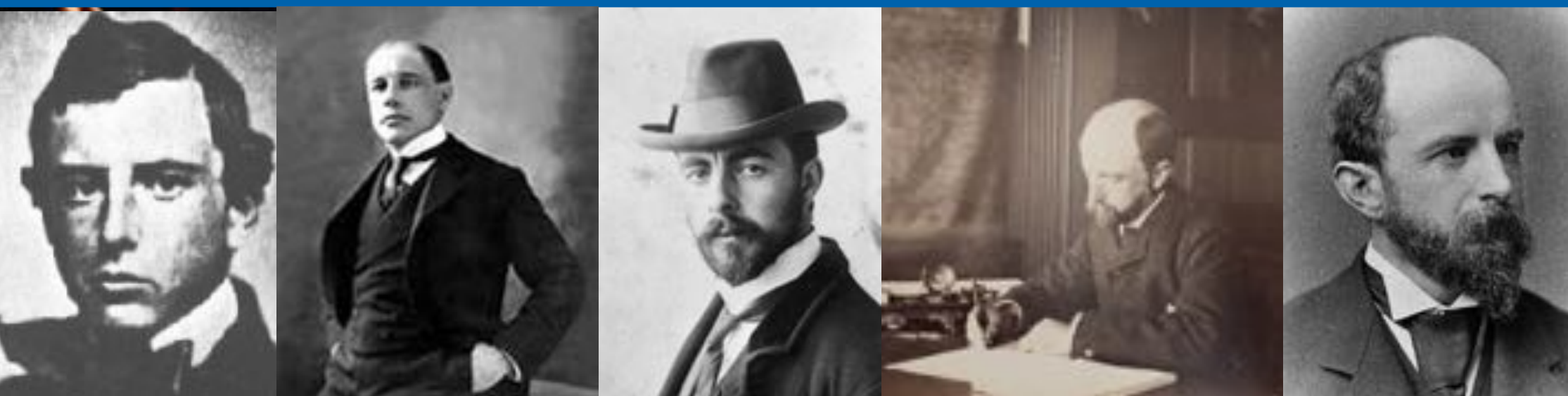
Picturing the Adamses



John Quincy



Charles
Francis



Henry

Photography Before Photographs

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The photographic "truth"

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Photography as documentation

- Fixing identities

- Documenting the deviant

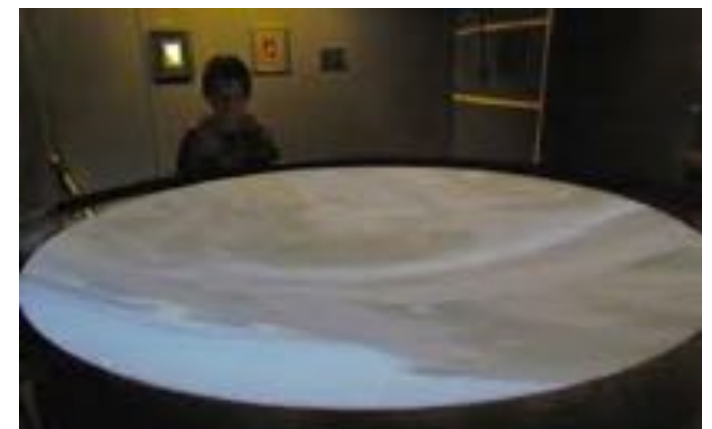
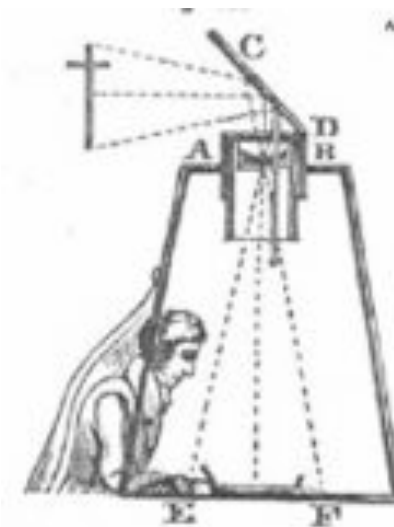
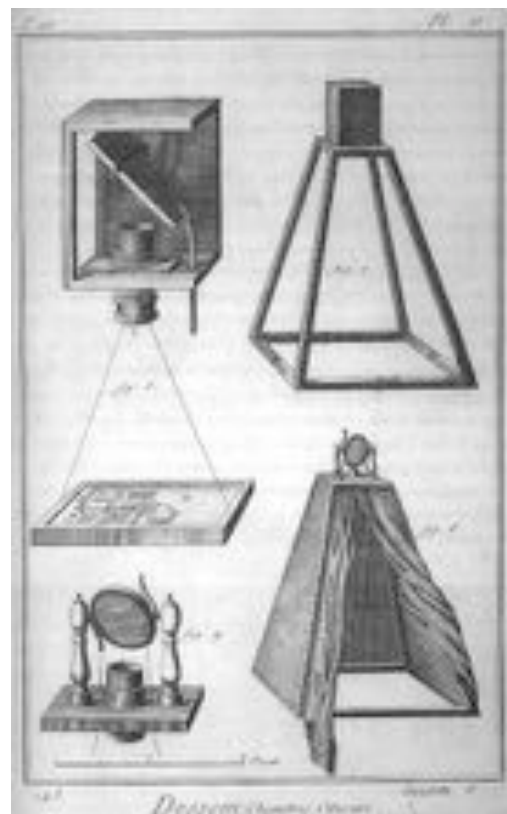
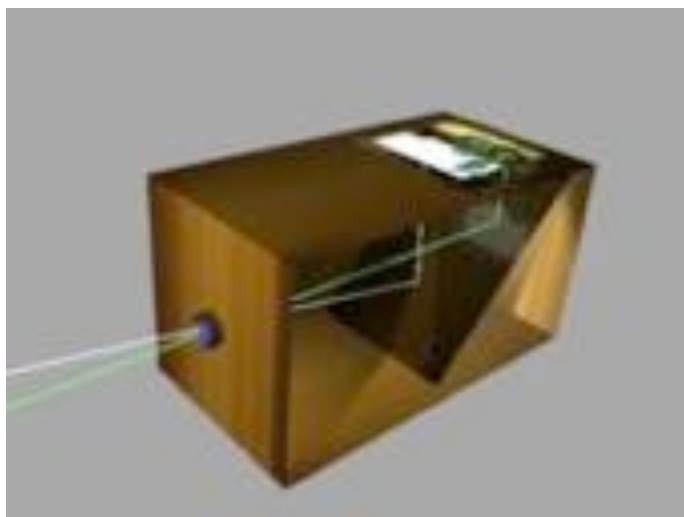
- Representing the forgotten

Photography Before Photographs



Ibn al-Hatham
965-1039

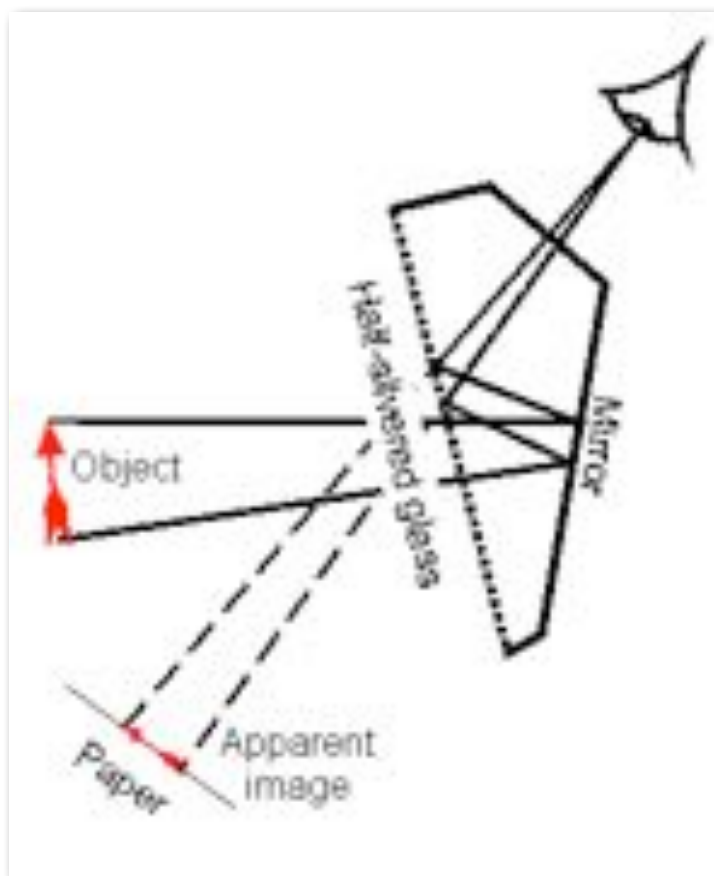
The camera obscura: images from nature





Photography Before Photographs

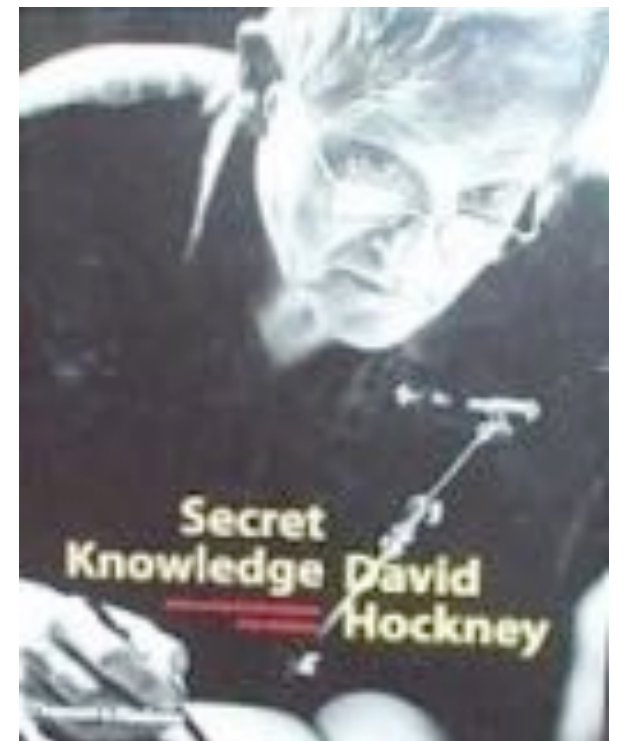
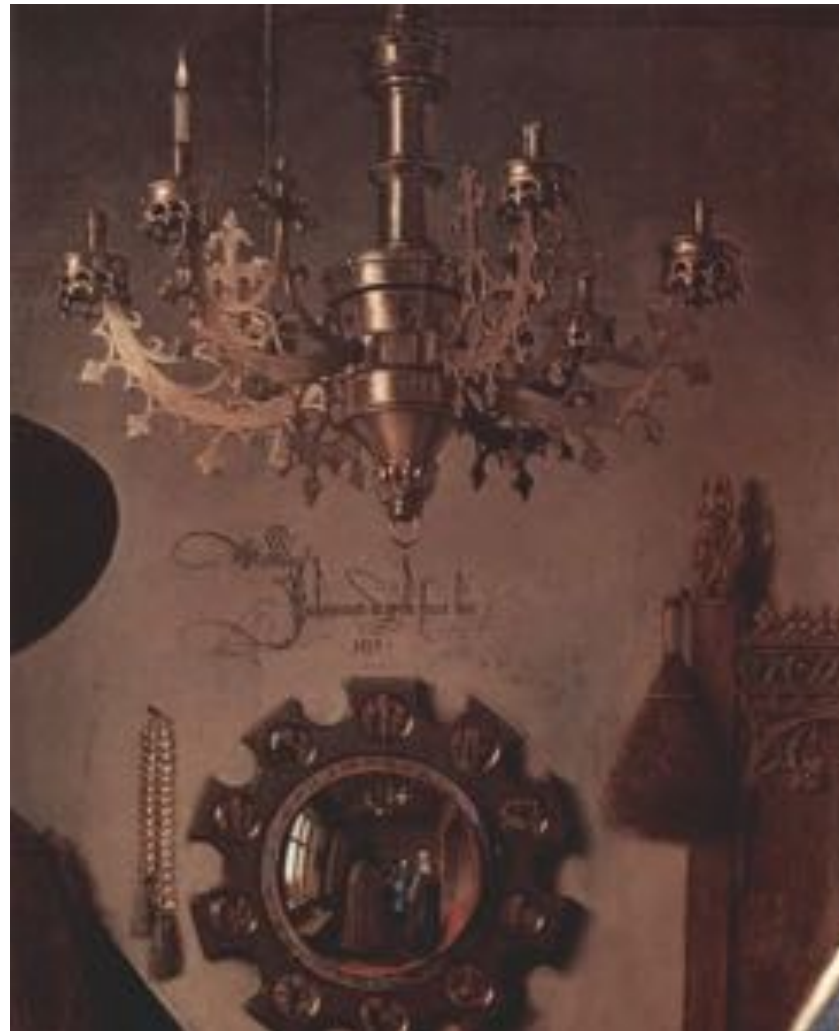
The camera lucida



Photography Before Photographs



Lenses and mirrors -- an old masters' "cheat"?



Detail from Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini portrait, 1434

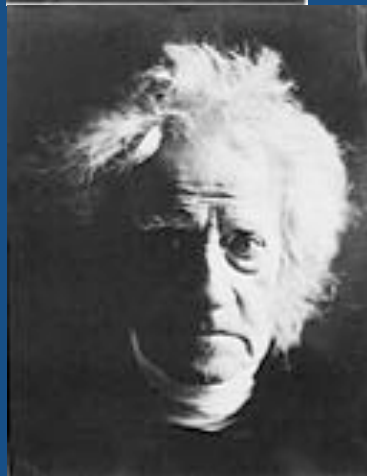
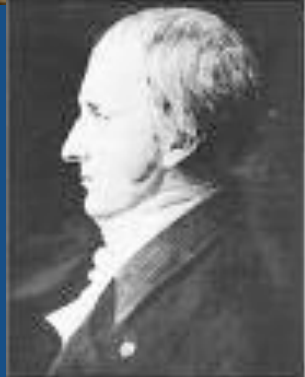
Creating a permanent image: Invention by committee



1725: Johann Heinrich Schulze demonstrates that silver compounds are visibly changed by the action of light

1800: Thomas Wedgwood makes images on leather impregnated with silver nitrate, but is unable to prevent progressive darkening

1819: Sir John Herschel discovers that sodium hyposulfite ("hypo") will dissolve silver halides, can be used to "fix" photographic prints.



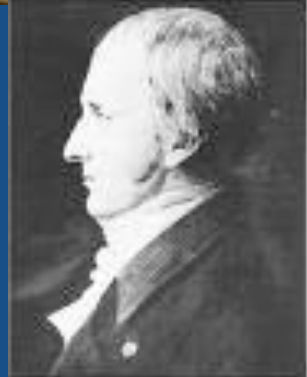
Sir John Herschel, photographed by Julia Cameron, 1867

Creating a permanent image: Invention by committee



1725:

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stenci
image

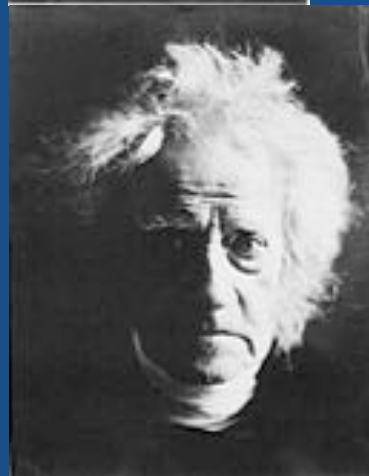


1800:

impre
progr

1819:

("hypo
photo



Sir Jo

Cameron, 1867

Inventions—the name by which we call devices that seem fundamentally new—are almost always born out of a process that is more like farming than magic. From a complex ecology...that includes the condition of the intellectual soil, the political climate, the state of technical competence... the suggestion of new possibilities arises.

...After many incremental successes and nominal failures a new idea... gains a measure of success that lifts it over the threshold into visibility, at which point it is given a name and begins its official history.

John Szarkowski, *Photography Until Now*

The earliest photographs



1826: Nicéphore Niépce makes "heliograph" on plate from window in Gras

1837: Louis Daguerre announces in 1837 a new "chemical and physical process" which "is not merely an instrument which serves to draw Nature; it gives her the ability to reproduce herself."



Daguerre's first surviving image, 1835



“...how charming it would be if it were possible to cause these natural images to imprint themselves durably, and remain fixed upon the paper.”

The earliest photographs



First negative—latticed window 1835

1835: William Henry Fox Talbot invents "photogenic drawing": method of printing on paper, later the calotype, which makes use of latent image, permitting 1-3 min exposures.



“Mousetrap camera”



Lacock Abbey

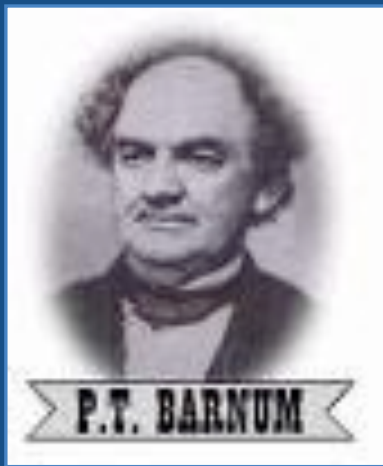


The brief, happy reign of the Daguerreotype

By 1840's Daguerreotype becomes "the mirror with a memory" (Oliver Wendell Holmes)



The brief, happy reign of the Daguerreotype



1854: Phineas Barnum stages first modern beauty pageant, using Daguerrotypes for judging

In a mobile and transient society concerned with preserving stable images of personal identity, a photographic likeness... held a powerful appeal.... Daguerreotype portraits quickly became a staple item of postal exchange.... The unique daguerreotype image was both a bodily relic and an intimate epistle in its own right.
David Henkin, *The Postal Age*



Second Thoughts

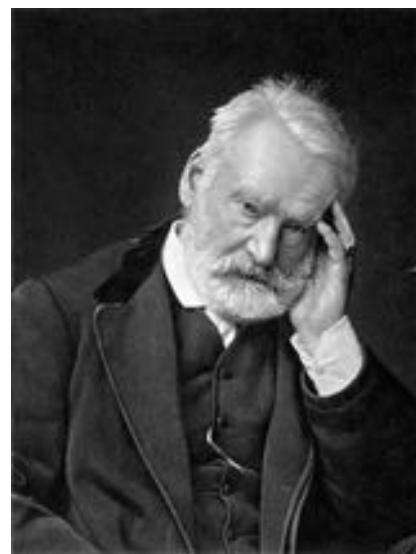
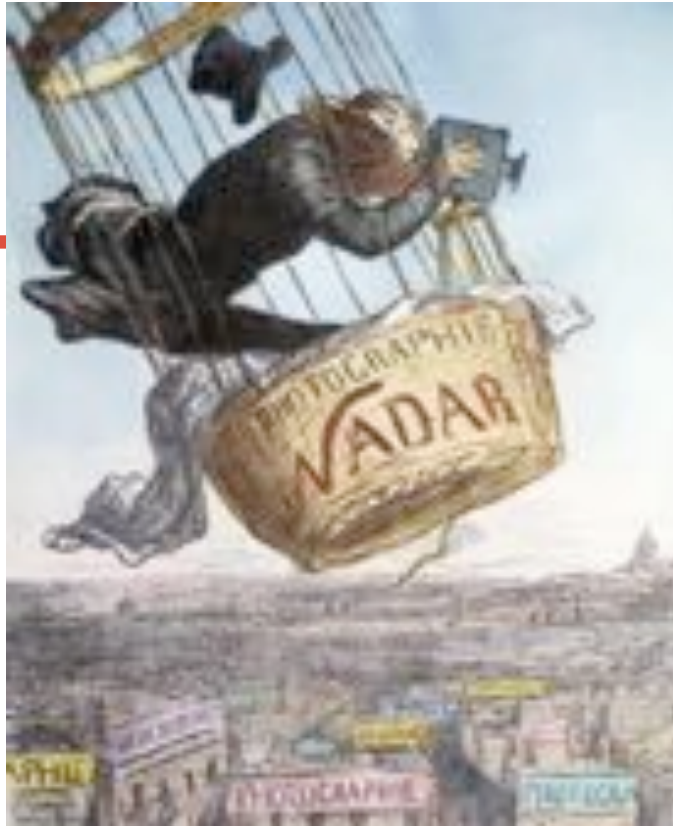


Charles
Baudelaire, by Nadar

During this lamentable period, a new industry arose which contributed not a little to confirm stupidity in its faith and to ruin whatever might remain of the divine in the French mind. The idolatrous mob demanded an ideal worthy of itself and appropriate to its nature... A revengeful God has given ear to the prayers of this multitude. Daguerre was his Messiah. ... From that moment our squalid society rushed, Narcissus to a man, to gaze at its trivial image on a scrap of metal.



Photographic Fame



Victor Hugo



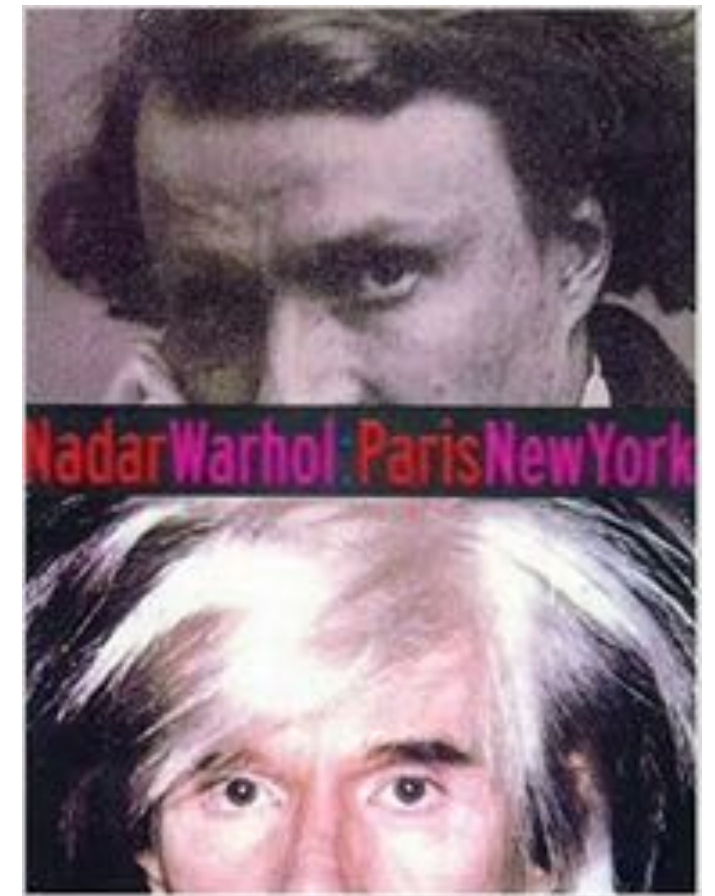
Sarah Bernhardt



Cartes de visite, Victoria, Dickens



Lincoln, by Brady



Nadar–Warhol, Paris–New York: photography and fame, MOMA 1999

The photographic truth

Why photography?

- Photography as a technology
- photography and information

“Inventing” photography

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- Documenting war

Manipulating the photographic truth

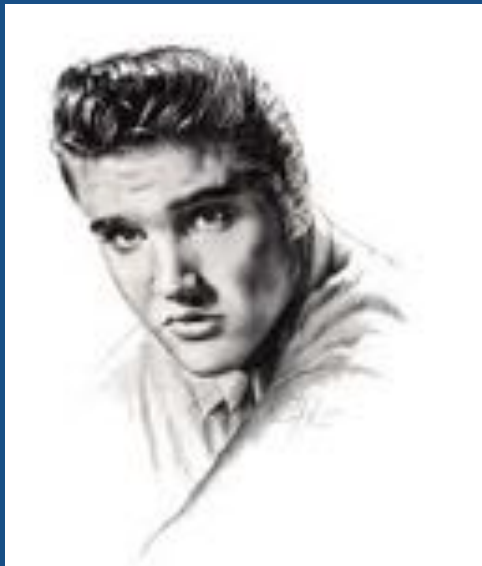
Photography as documentation

- Fixing identities

- Documenting the deviant

- Representing the forgotten

Establishing Remote Presence



Representing elsewhere symbolically or iconically

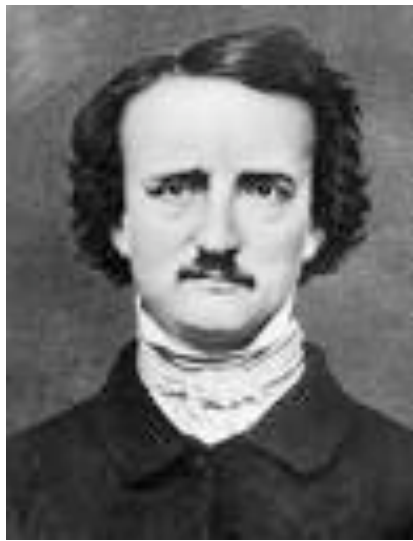
Writing, print, telegraphy, postal service etc.;
also painting, engraving, etc.

Extending virtual presence

Photography, telephony, cinema, radio, television



Why do photographs seem more truthful than other kinds of pictures? One of the most intuitive explanations... is that the photograph... has a direct relationship to the thing it represents. This relationship has been called “indexical”... a sign that has **a causal connection to the thing it represents**, such as smoke to a fire.... Mia Fineman, *Faking It*



Poe

The truth of photographs



"This I believe to be the first incidence on record of a house having painted its own portrait." Fox Talbot, 1839

"[It] is not merely an instrument which serves to draw Nature; it gives her the ability to reproduce herself." Louis Daguerre. 1837

In truth, the Daguerreotyped plate is infinitely more accurate in its representation than any painting by human hands. If we examine a work of ordinary art, by means of a powerful microscope, all traces of resemblance to nature will disappear—but the closest scrutiny of the photographic drawing discloses only a more accurate truth, a more perfect identity of aspect with the thing represented.

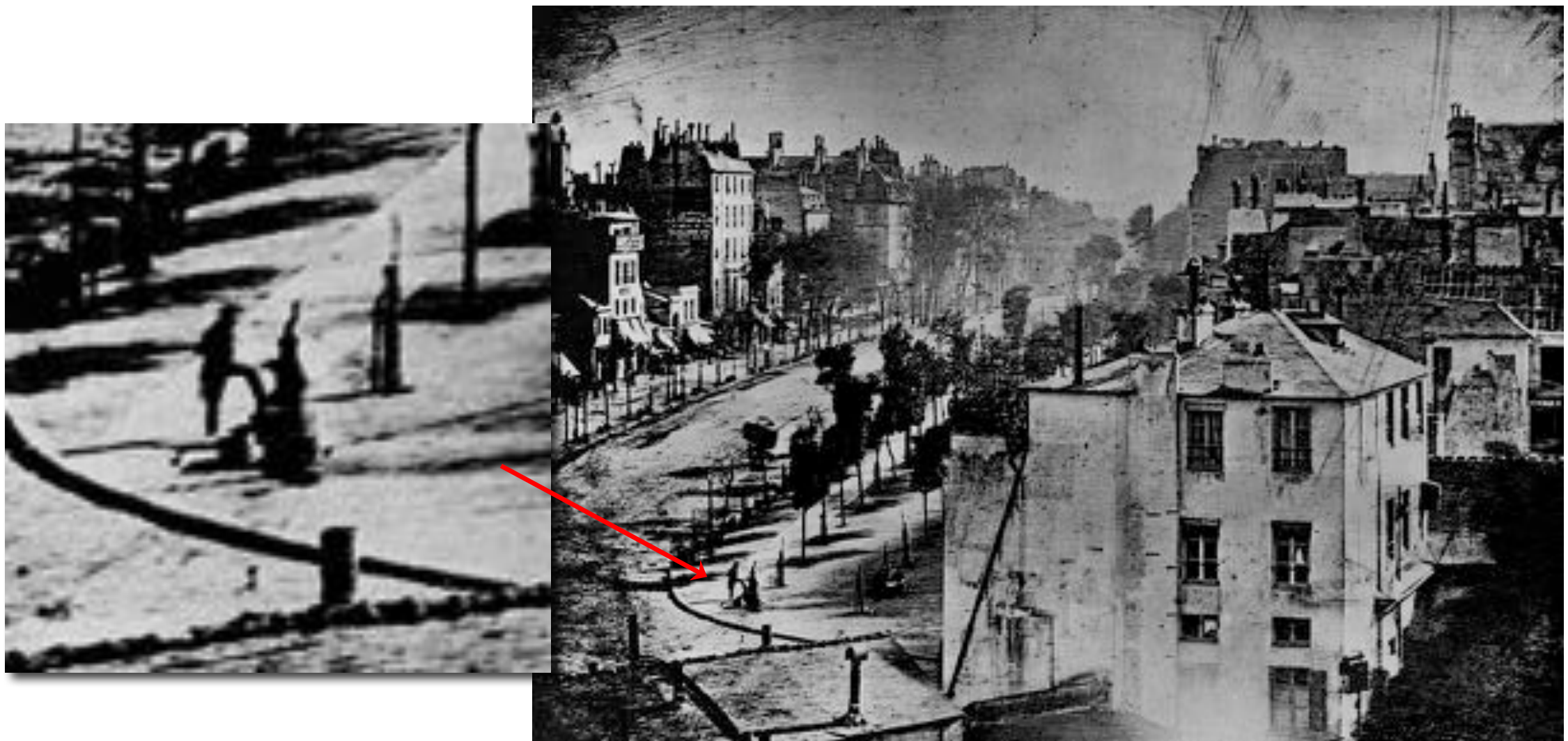
E. A. Poe, 1839

I of 5-panel daguerreotype panorama of San Francisco, 1851



The photographic truth

1838: Daguerre, photograph of rue du Temple,



The photograph as a model for journalistic objectivity



“The *Sun* ... will endeavour to present its daily photograph of the whole world's doings in the most luminous and lively manner.”
Charles Dana

The *New York Herald* is now the representative of American manners, of American thought. It is the daily daguerreotype of the heart and soul of the model republic. *London Times*, 1848

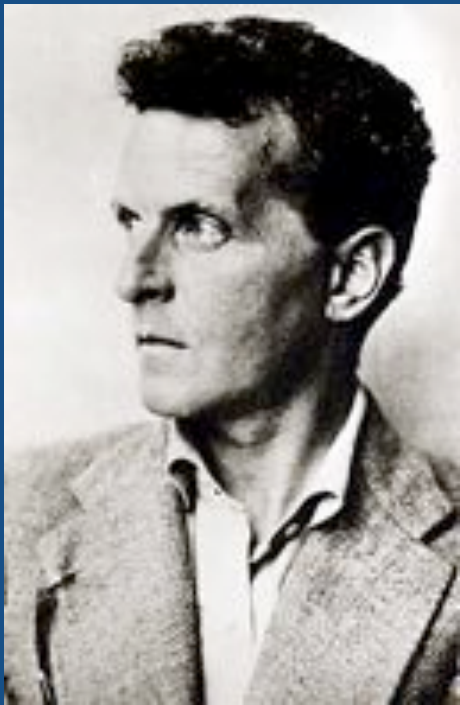
objective
noun | ob-jec-tive | \əb-jek-tiv, əb-\

Definition of OBJECTIVE

- 1 : a **lens** or system of lenses that forms an image of an object
- 2 **a** : something toward which effort is directed : an aim, goal, or end of action
b : a **strategic** position to be attained or a purpose to be achieved by a military operation



The arbitrariness of photographic "truth"



We regard the photograph, the picture on our wall, as the object itself (the man, landscape, and so on) depicted there.

This need not have been so. We could easily imagine people who did not have this relation to such pictures. Who, for example, would be repelled by photographs, because a face without color and even perhaps a face in reduced proportions struck them as inhuman.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, II

The Photographic Document: War Photography

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Crimea: The First “Reported” War



Oct 25, 1854: Charge of the Light
Brigade (Richard Caton Woodville, Jr.)

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred....

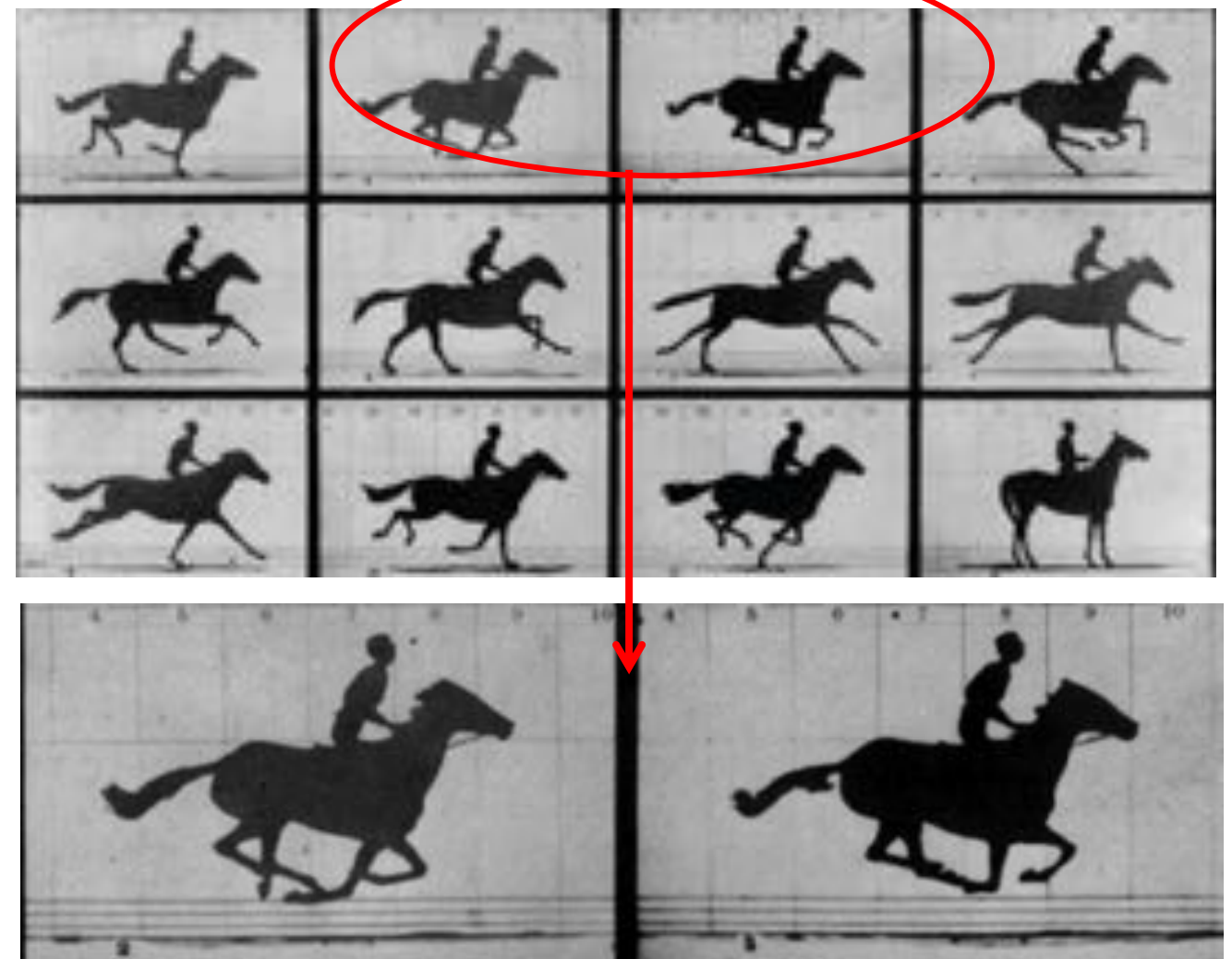
Alfred Tennyson



Sidebar: capturing gaits



Oct 25, 1854: Charge of the Light
Brigade (Richard Caton Woodville, Jr.)



Eadweard Muybridge 1878

Crimea: The First Photographed War



Roger Fenton

1854-55: Wm. Howard Russell reports for *Times* from Crimea on incompetence of general staff, lack of supplies, etc. sending dispatches by telegraph

1855: Roger Fenton sent to Crimea to take photos to counter Russell's *Times* reports



Wm. Russell



Sidebar: The Lady with the Lamp



Florence Nightingale, "The Lady with the Lamp," 1951



Lo! in that house of misery
A lady with a lamp I see
Pass through the glimmering gloom,
And flit from room to room.
H. W. Longfellow, 1857



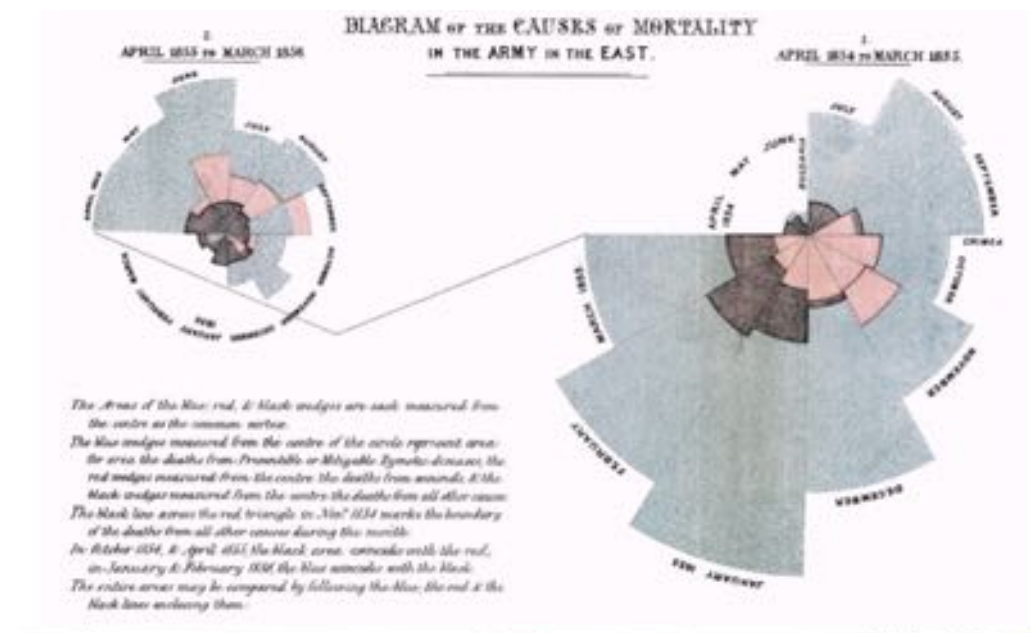
Sidebar: The Lady with the ~~Lamp~~ Polar Chart



Florence Nightingale, "The Lady with the Lamp"



Pie Chart by Wm Playfair, Statistical Breviary" 1801



Polar Chart by Frances Nightingale 1858



Matthew Brady



Photographing the Civil War



Union batteries at Fredricksburg, VA



"Mr Brady has brought home to us the terrible reality and earnestness of war."

“If war could be photographed in all its monstrous actuality ... that would be a great deterrent for war.” Edward Steichen

Photographs as Symbols



Robert Capa 1936



Joe Rosenthal, 1945



Yvgeny Khaldei 1945



Photographs as Symbols



Yvgeny Khaldei 1945



The Vietnam Narrative



Eddie Adams 1968



Nick Ut 1972

Manipulating Photographic "Truth"

...the average person believes implicitly that the photograph cannot falsify. Of course, you and I know that this unbounded faith in the integrity of the photograph is often rudely shaken, for, while photographs may not lie, liars may photograph. Lewis Hine

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Manipulating Photographic Truth



“[Alexander] Gardner’s dead sharpshooter, his long rifle gleaming by his side, is not imagined. This man lived; this is the spot where he fell; this is how he looked in death... If we had been there, we would have seen it so.... We have been shown again and again that ...subjects can be misrepresented, distorted, faked... but this knowledge cannot shake our implicit faith in the truth of a photographic record.” Beaumont Newhall

Manipulating Photographic Truth

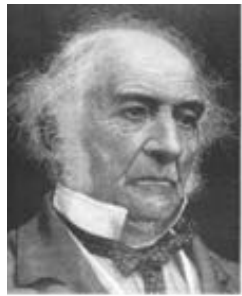
"We have been shown again and again that this is pure illusion. Subjects can be misrepresented, distorted, faked... but this knowledge cannot shake our implicit faith in the truth of a photographic record."



Doctoring the Truth

1871: Paris Commune: Photographs of executions by communards are doctored to change identity of victims.





W. Gladstone

Doctoring the Truth



Figure 18.1 Prime Minister Gladstone shown standing outside a London pub. Combination print photograph reproduced by Messrs. Boning and Small by making two exposures. (From Jelf 1894, 520).



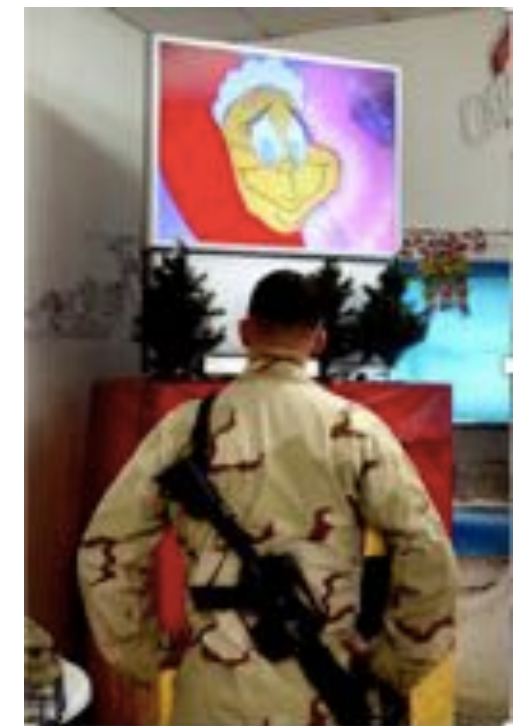
Mao Zedong and Bo Gu (l.), 1936

Rewriting history

Fonda Speaks To Vietnam Veterans At Anti-War Rally



Actress And Anti-War Activist Jane Fonda Speaks To A Crowd Of Vietnam Veterans As Activist And Former Vietnam Vet John Kerry (LEFT) Listens and prepares to speak next concerning the war in Vietnam (AP Photo)



Modern alterations: Aesthetic choices?

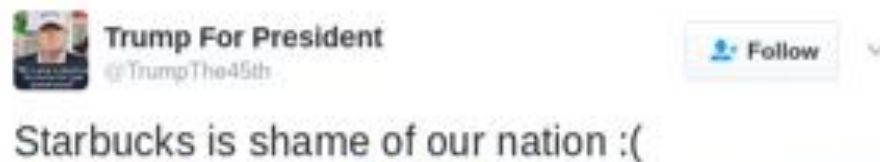


Pulitzer Prize winning photo by John
Filo, Kent State, 1970



“Spirit photographs” 1869

Are we more sophisticated about photographs now?



“Digital photography and Photoshop have taught us to think about photographic images in a different way—as potentially manipulated images with a strong but always mediated resemblance to the things they depict.” Mia Fineman, *Faking It: Manipulated Photography before Photoshop*

New Starbucks opens in Downtown Disney at Disneyland with stylish look, interactive features complimenting classic menu

IN DISNEY, DISNEYLAND RESORT, FOOD, MERCHANDISE



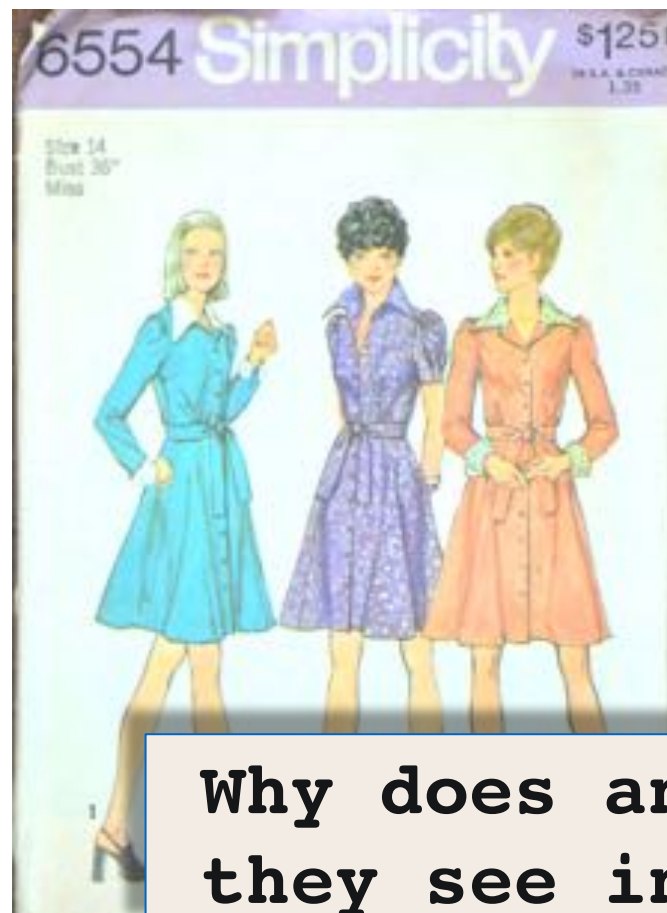
Executives with Starbucks open the doors for the first time at the newest coffee shop in Downtown Disney at the Disneyland Resort in Anaheim.



“Spirit photographs” 1869

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Mia Fineman, *Faking It: Manipulated Photography before Photoshop*



Why does anybody ever believe what they see in a photograph?



Photography as Documentation

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Entry for 13-year-old "vagrant," San Joaquin County Jail, ca. 1900



Wanted poster for Butch Cassidy

Documenting the Criminal

Creating the mug shot



"Bank book" prepared for bank clients by Pinkerton Detective Agency, ca. 1875



Figure 2. "The Inspector's Model" from Thomas Byrnes, *Professional Criminals of America* (New York: Cassell, 1886), between 52 and 53.

Classifying Deviance: The "Criminal Type"



Cesare Lombroso

Lombroso: Hereditary criminals are identified by large jaws, handle-shaped ears, shifty eyes, etc.

The criminal is "an atavistic being who reproduces in his person the ferocious instincts of primitive humanity and the inferior animals."

Cesare Lombroso



"Revolutionaries and political criminals
-- the semi-insane and morally insane"
-- the semi-insane and morally insane"



Inmate of Bethlam Royal Hospital for the
Criminally Lunatic, 1870s



Francis Galton

Composite Types & "Objectivity"

"... the imaginative power even of the highest artists is far from precise, and... no two artists agree in any of their typical forms. The merit of the photographic composite is its mechanical precision, being subject to no errors beyond those incidental to all photographic productions." Francis Galton



Composite:
Violent Criminals



Composite of Jews



Eugenics and Photography

"My general object has been to take note of the varied hereditary faculties of different men, and of the great differences in families and races, to learn how far history may have shown the practicability of supplanting the human stock by better strains, and to consider whether it might not be our duty to do so by such efforts as may be reasonable, thus exerting ourselves to further the ends of evolution more rapidly and with less distress than if events were left to their own course." Francis Galton



Auschwitz documentary photo

Photography as an instrument of social control



Photos of Downieville CA Chinese
Prepared by Justice of the Peace, ca.
1890



Image prepared for Louis Agassiz

Truth before all. The more pity I felt at the sight of this degraded and degenerate race, the more impossible it becomes for me to repress the feeling that they are not of the same blood as we are. 1846



Representing the forgotten

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...It is for these Servants of the Common Good to educate and direct public opinion.... I wonder, sometimes, what an enterprising manufacturer would do if his wares, instead of being inanimate things, were the problems and activities of life itself... Would he not grasp eagerly at such opportunities to play upon the sympathies of his customers as are afforded by the camera? Lewis Hine



Lewis Hine, Carolina Cotton Mill, 1909



"Some boys and girls were so small they had to climb up on to the spinning frame to mend broken threads and to put back the empty bobbins."

The golf links lie so near the mill
That almost every day,
The laboring children can look out
And see the men at play.

Sarah Cleghorn, 1915



Documenting the forgotten

WHY THIS DOUBLE STANDARD?

One New England Corporation Owns Cotton Mills In Georgia and Massachusetts

In Massachusetts They Employ	In Georgia They Employ
Immigrant Children 16 years old and upward 10 Hours a Day.	Native Children 10 years old and upward 11 Hours a Day.
<i>Why these better conditions in Massachusetts? Public Opinion Demands Them.</i>	<i>Why these poor conditions in Georgia? Public Opinion Demands Them.</i>

What a Reflection On

Public Opinion

MAKING HUMAN JUNK

GOOD MATERIAL AT FIRST

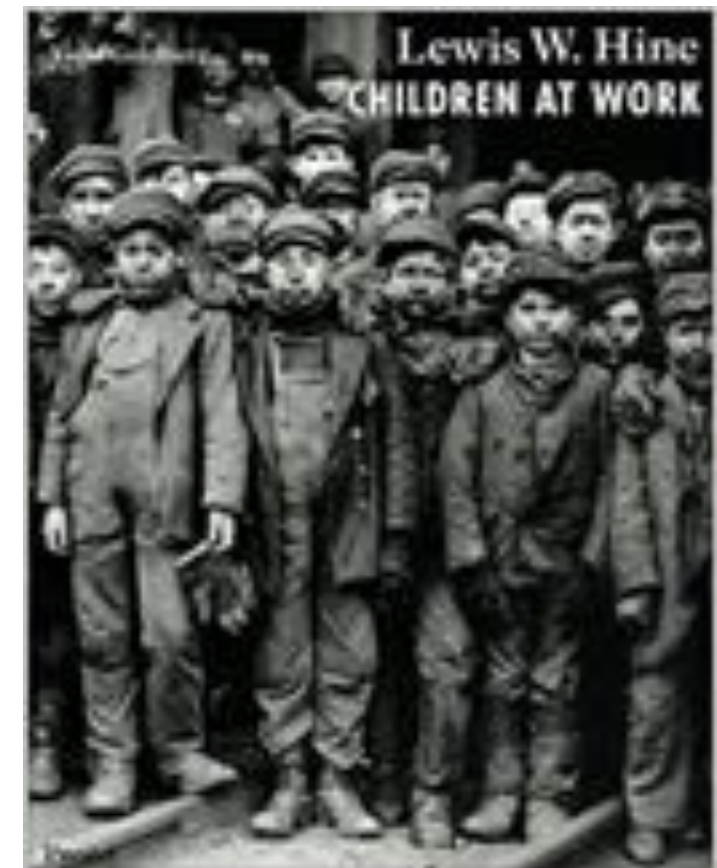
THE PROCESS

THE PRODUCT

No future and low wages

"Junk"

SHALL INDUSTRY BE ALLOWED TO PUT THIS COST ON SOCIETY?



Documenting the forgotten



Jacob Riis:
How the Other Half Lives



Photography and the awakening of social conscience



Lithograph prepared from
Riis photo



Dorothea Lange

Documenting the forgotten



Walker Evans

Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange, Farm Security Administration, mid-1930s



Lange, photos of Dust Bowl

The effort is to recognize the stature of a portion of unimagined existence.

James Agee, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*



In sum

Photography is a “technology” defined by market forces, public attitudes, social functions & technical/scientific bases

Photography was “invented” by many people over many years

Photography provides a model for objectivity & “truthfulness” despite its manipulability

Photography has been used to classify “deviants” and enforce social control—but also to raise social consciousness and illuminate society’s margins.

Readings for March 21

21 March: Computer "Revolution"

Graham-Cumming, John. 2012 "The Greatest Machine That Never Was," TEDx (video). 29 April.
Watch: Entire video.

This twelve-minute video will introduce you to Babbage and Lovelace. Meanwhile, you can think of Lardner as the Graham-Cumming of his day.

Babbage, Charles. 1822. *A Letter to Sir Humphrey Davy, Bart, President of The Royal Society ... On the Application of Machinery to the Purpose of Calculating and Printing Mathematical Tables*. London: B & A Taylor.
Read: All

Lardner, Dionysius. 1834. [Review of Babbage's Writings] *Edinburgh Review*, July: 263-327.
Read: "Introduction," pp. 263 to the break on 285, to get a sense of how the Difference Engine worked and how it was seen by contemporaries.

Lovelace, Ada. 1852. "Notes by the Translator" to L.F. Menabrea, "On Babbage's Analytic Engine."
Read: beginning of "Note G", pp 722 to the end of point 6 on page 723, to get a sense both of the Analytical Engine and of Lovelace's insight.

No assignment